

Tarkiln Study Proposed for Special Town Meeting

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

A proposal to begin the process of preserving the Tarkiln Community Center on Summer St. (Route 53) will come before voters at the Special Town Meeting on Monday, June 14.

The Community Preservation Committee and the Duxbury Historical Commission are sponsoring an article that seeks \$33,000 for an architectural/structural assessment of the old school building, which dates back to 1871. The money will come from Community Preservation Act funds earmarked for historical preservation.

The purpose of the study is to provide a report that sets the proposed scope of work needed for the building and establishes a cost estimate sufficient to set a fee for the final designer. The study will be similar to the one done for the 1907 Wright building on St. George St.

According to Neil Johnson, the \$33,000 will pay for the following items: existing condition architectural and schematic drawings, sampling for lead paint and asbestos, estimates for new mechanical and electrical systems and other work. The study would also show how the building could be made handicapped accessible to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

In 2000, the town commissioned a similar study of the Tarkiln building, but Community Preservation Committee member Tony Kelso called that a "a very flawed study." The new study will be more comprehensive, he said.

"It's really going back to the drawing board to look at what the town wants to do with this building," said Kelso. "Over 400 people use it each week. It's one of the very few town meeting spaces on the west side of town."

Similar to the process of studying the re-use of the Wright building, selectmen will appoint a committee to figure out the use of the Tarkiln building. The use of Tarkiln has been the main argument against its renovation that has surfaced at Town Meetings in the past few years. The building is currently used by boy scouts, dance classes, the Duxbury 4-H group, a church and Alcoholics Anonymous. These groups pay a nominal rental



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—Rocco Longo,
Town Manager

fee. There are also town baseball fields and tennis courts on the six-acre Tarkiln property.

"Our intent was to start this discussion and push this discussion along," said George Wadsworth of the Community Preservation Committee. "It's time to start moving forward."

"There's always a time when you hit this spot where you have to spend money," said Town Manager Rocco Longo.

According to a proposal by the Duxbury Historical Commission, the Tarkiln Community Center "is both important historically, as one of the town's oldest school-houses still standing in its original location, and recreationally, as a venue for children's, arts, and sports activities. In the past few years, the structure has fallen into disrepair and needs significant work both to renovate the building and bring it up to code. Due to the building's historic nature, a careful and thorough plan for renovation is needed."

The oldest part of the building was built in 1871 as a one-room school house. In 1908 a matching building was built on the site as the school popula-

tion expanded. The two sides were connected in 1925. The connector housed bathrooms upstairs and a heating system in the basement. The Tarkiln school operated until about 1950 when a new elementary school was constructed.

"If we don't spend the money soon, that building will be falling down or will have to be torn down," said Kelso.

"If we don't maintain it, we'll have a very significant liability issue on our hands," said Longo.

(Editor's note: Susanna Sheehan is a member of the Historical Commission.)

In other business, selectmen:

- Learned the town has awarded the Duxbury Middle School alarm system to Systems, Inc. for \$137,680. Money to alarm all school and town buildings was approved by town meeting a few years ago.

- Received a proposal from the South Shore Habitat for Humanity to build an affordable home on the town-owned Merlet property.

- Received the final report from the Pier Access Shoreline Study Committee.

- Granted a one-day liquor license for the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society's Appraisal Day June 12.

- Approved a license for an open-air parking lot for Dana Battista, manager of the pavilion and parking lot at Duxbury Beach.

- Announced a public forum on affordable housing on May 12 at the town hall basement meeting room.